

# Newsweek

MARCH 31, 1941: p. 59

## Cross vs. Swastika in Norway

Norway long ago adopted from Germany Martin Luther's doctrine of church-state cooperation. Nearly 97 per cent of all Norwegians now worship through the established Norwegian Church (*Den Norske Kirke*), headed by seven bishops under the Storting (Parliament) and the King, and government-financed to the tune of 12,000,000 kroner (about \$2,700,000) a year.

But Norsemen don't accept Adolf Hitler's doctrines so readily. By last week there had arrived in the United States full details of a battle between cross and Swastika in their conquered country. The conflict began in January, when the seven bishops petitioned Ragnar Skancke (pronounced *skonka*), acting Minister of Church and Education, for "clarification" of the Quislingists' attitude on law and order. Specifically, they detailed these incidents indicating that "fundamental principles of justice are being broken down":

- An attack by Nazi Storm Troopers on teachers at Oslo Business College and the flogging of an office boy.
- The resignation of the entire Supreme Court of Norway, protesting the Justice Department's interference in administration of the courts.
- A police edict that ministers may be jailed for refusing to violate the secrecy of the confessional.

"It is therefore imperative and essential," said the bishops, "that the church should know clearly whether the state . . . accepts and honors the legal and moral obligations contained in the church's articles of faith and in the Bible."

Two weeks passed and the prelates received no reply from Skancke. Then three of them, headed by Dr. Eivind Jensen Berggrav, popular and cultured Primate and Bishop of Oslo, interviewed him but got no satisfaction. Finally Skancke did give them a terse answer. Ominously, it warned against "any acts which may increase the unrest of our people. Thoughtless action now may result in serious consequences for the church."

The aroused bishops promptly drafted a letter based on this correspondence and sent it to all ministers. And though the government tried to suppress it, many pastors read it from their pulpits. Defiantly, it declared: "Can the church quietly sit on the sidelines while the commandments of God are set aside and while many other events take place which dissolve law and order? . . . In our congregations we now perceive a ferment of conscience and we feel it our duty to let the authorities hear clear and loud the voice of the church."